

# Evaluation report

Evaluated point	Grade	Comments
Scientific impact of research	Good	<p>The Software Technology and Applications Competence Centre was founded (STACC) in 2009. It was conceived as a bridge between Tartu University and the private sector offering applied research services in data analytics.</p> <p>The research competence in data analytics is excellent. The centre has identified four strategic areas for application of data analytics, and the scientific leadership includes Professors of the Tartu University's Institute of Computer Science who have outstanding research track records of relevance. The centre also has a number of experienced full-time staff who hold PhDs. The scientific quality of staff at the centre is without doubt, and there is clearly also impact as evident through a variety of applied research projects with industrial partners.</p> <p>However, the research at STACC is so closely linked with research in Tartu University and Cybernetica that there is a confusing picture of what impact specifically to associate with STACC. The submitted application and information on the STACC website for example do not provide the same information. Moreover, scientific impact in the open scientific community is limited due to the very low output of publications. Scientific impact is achieved by the products and technologies it provides, and the training of PhD students.</p>
Sustainability and potential of research	Good	<p>The centre has only been in operation since 2009 and clearly needs time to develop. STACC has several ongoing programs of research, and has a close relationship with Cybernetica and Tartu University. It combines a scientific and business environment, and research is carried out according to business guidelines. Leading highly cited scientists act as project managers, and the motivation for product development and commercialization will ultimately underpin sustainability. There are questions at this point about the pathway through which to become self-sustaining and how to establish some independence of Cybernetica from Tartu University.</p>
Societal importance of research	Very good	<p>The research operation at STACC is entirely focussed on applications for industry and society. This is well aligned with Estonian policies, such as smart specialisation. Societal relevance of STACC activities and research is clear with the growing need for solutions and improvements to software and applications related to growth of the digital economy, including the problems of data storage and analysis, internet security, and optimization of website browsing. STACC has contributed to core technologies in three growing IT companies.</p>

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Scientific basis in the field is sufficient to conduct doctoral studies. (This question should be answered only if: a) institution being evaluated is conducting doctoral studies and; b) The field being evaluated is proposed to grant positive evaluation. If these conditions are met then: a) If the level of scientific basis is sufficient for conducting doctoral studies in every structural unit being evaluated, then the answer should be „yes“; b) If the scientific basis is not sufficient in some structural units, then those units should be listed.)		YES. Although STACC by itself does not provide a sufficient environment for doctoral research it is closely associated with research groups at Tartu University. Thus, it readily provides an environment in which PhD students who train at Tartu University can carry out large parts of their research projects.

## Summary assessment

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Areas of special note as appropriate (Where necessary indicate sub-fields, assessment criteria, and/or structural units which, in the committee's opinion, were of a notably high level.)		STACC plays an important role in transfer of technology and as an incubator. The research competence in data analytics is excellent. STACC provides very good conditions to students for internships. Staff were clearly committed, enthusiastic about their future and expert in their fields. The motivation for future development was clearly expressed.
Areas in need of improvement as appropriate (Where necessary indicate sub-fields of the field being evaluated, assessment criteria, and/or structural units which, in the committee's opinion, revealed significant shortcomings.)		STACC needs to formalize its relationships. It is very good that STACC enjoys very close informal relationships with University research groups, and also with other partners such as Cybernetica. However, there needs to be much more clarity about what stakes the different partners have in different activities and outputs. Aspects of IP ownership were unclear in the case of PhD projects. All PhD students working at STACC have to be registered at a University in order to carry out a PhD but there are no clear agreements in place about any IP generated. It is unclear whether the University would receive any benefits should any exploitation result.
Assessment proposal to the Minister of Education and Research	To grant positive evaluation	The centre has only been in operation since 2009 and clearly needs time to develop. Since it had not been evaluated before it could not apply for national research grants, which clearly hinders its development at this point. The quality of research and the scope of the research program, although very much entangled with Tartu University and Cybernetica and therefore difficult to assess independently, is of sufficient quality to grant a positive evaluation.

## Feedback

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Feedback for institution (This question should be answered only if the institution asked for feedback from the evaluation committee in the self-report (about up to three specific areas of R&D which it finds to be currently important, e.g., related to its development plan).)	NA
Suggestions for unit, institution, state etc (As appropriate, committee can give additional feedback for the structural unit, the institution, or the State (please specify whom feedback is directed to) according to the directive assessment criteria for regular evaluation (article 7).	NA